

MEMORANDUM FOR:

The attached is a memorandum I prepared for the Director last month which [] suggested would be of interest to you.

18 June 1973
(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101
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21 MAY 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : [REDACTED]
Special Assistant to the
Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Substantive Needs in Military Intelligence

This memorandum identifies some substantive problems and need improvements in the military intelligence product of the Central Intelligence Agency that I believe should guide our thinking about reorganization and management. Although the [REDACTED] Committee would concur in some of the observations herein, I do not claim to speak for it.

OUTLINE

A. Relevant Time Frame:

Military intelligence must focus on future time periods directly relevant to defense policy decisions.

B. Why Soviet Force Programs and Deployments?

Doing well in assessing constraints and capabilities, military intelligence must give greater attention to motivational factors; i.e., strategic and political utility functions, threat perceptions, bureaucratic factors.

C. Strategic Counterdeception:

Military intelligence must upgrade its ability to detect strategic deception within and outside the purview of arms control agreements because the Soviets regard deception as a legitimate tool of policy, our collectors are theoretically vulnerable to deception, and an institutionalized concern about deception is usually required to detect it.

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D. Net Assessment:

Military intelligence is required to assess hostile military power in relation to other hostile assets and weaknesses, and in direct relation to United States capabilities.

E. Future Technologies, Systems, and Strategies:

Military intelligence must assist scientific intelligence in forewarning of technological breakthroughs. It must also be alert to more modest composite changes in several technologies that together portend major changes in the military environment.

F. Theater Priorities:

With enough flexibility to adapt to crises, military intelligence must allocate its attention according to an explicit menu of theater priorities (e.g., United States-Soviet strategic, NATO-Pact, Sino-Soviet, etc.) derived from long term policy requirements.

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SUBSTANTIVE NEEDS IN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

1. The United States Intelligence Community and this Agency have become very successful in presenting voluminous intelligence observables. The product stream has been dominated by descriptions of what is going on. This product stream has come under criticism for a variety of reasons. The most important reason is that the observables have become so numerous and diverse. Even a first order integration of them does not speak for itself to the concerns of the policy maker. Each step of the analytical chain away from observables leaves the question: "But what does it mean?" A factor that compels the policy maker to demand assessments beyond the immediate observables is the long lead times of the most important military policy decisions (relating to both arms and arms control). Another is the erosion of confidence in concepts of strategic force utility that preceded the Soviet attainment of equality and the beginnings of strategic tripolarity.

2. A consolidated and/or reorganized military intelligence effort at the Agency must be geared to address explicitly the following substantive concerns:

A. Relevant Time Frame:

1. Barring crisis situations, the most vital function of national military intelligence is to support the formulation of policy on military forces and arms control. Given lead times on development and deployment of new weaponry and on major changes in force composition or organization, important defense policy decisions may begin to have effect only five years or more after they are taken, and continue to have an effect for up to twenty more years. Similarly, arms control measures may take years to define and negotiate; they may be intended to last indefinitely. Thus, from the national policy maker's vantage point, the central military intelligence questions of today are in fact questions about the late 1970's and beyond.

2. Military intelligence is long accustomed to the pressures to predict and fully aware of its pitfalls. Careful efforts to project the future capabilities and behavior of opponents are an unavoidable task of military intelligence. Unfortunately, in both analysis and presentation, however, the task of projection takes second place to the more satisfying

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and certain task of describing current reality. Modern military intelligence must go beyond the "facts." In doing so, it must indulge in imaginative but balanced conjecture. It must explore and present meaningful alternative projections. It must make its assumptions and uncertainties explicit. Most important, it must participate in weighing the policy consequences of alternative projections, for only in this process is discovered what "makes a difference" and what has to be examined most closely.

B. Why do the Soviets (or others) want the military forces that we see them developing and deploying?

1. The policy maker's complaint is that, even after reading relevant NIE's from cover to cover--which he rarely does, he does not have an answer to this question that is relevant to policy or threat projection beyond the near term. He then attempts his own mental integration of the voluminous data or turns to some intuitive appreciation.

2. To better approximate useful answers to this question, military intelligence analysis must devote more attention to:

a. The Soviet strategic/military calculus. Is there a composite military rationale for the forces the Soviets develop and deploy at least as explicit and integrated as the messages of United States Secretaries of Defense? The usual inputs to such analysis are stated doctrine, inferences from observed weapons, and data from exercises. Although such inputs are scrutinized, they are rarely pulled together into an integrated Soviet military calculus.

b. Soviet perceptions of the political utility of military power. Here the record of Agency attention is not bad. But discourse on political utility is often divorced from military utility. Thus, when we observe a capability that appears not to make much operational sense, we fall back to a line that explains it on political grounds; i.e., to manifest great power status, etc. United States policy makers find this very weak because they have very little freedom to invest in cosmetic military capabilities; they doubt the Soviets have such freedom.

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c. Operative Soviet threat perceptions. In attempting to divine how the Soviets actually look at United States (or other) military forces, we usually rely on what they say in public or private forums and on conservatively adjusted analysis of our own known forces. Both approaches can be misleading. More empirical effort must be devoted to reconstructing Soviet threat perceptions. For example, given their collection capabilities, what do the Soviets understand about Minuteman III accuracy?

d. Soviet bureaucratic politics/military interest groups. All agree that this approach can be very useful but is also limited. Unfortunately, more energy has been devoted to polemicizing for or against it than to analyzing fully a fairly rich body of available data and expertise.

3. These considerations address the motivational side of an opponent's behavior. They must be wedded with assessments of the technological and economic constraints under which he operates. We have tended to be rather better at gauging the latter than the former because constraints, like capabilities, take physical form, while motivations do not. But looking beyond the near term, military intelligence must assess the degree to which physical constraints on an opponent are themselves subject to change over time through motivated behavior.

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2. In addition to the normal tools of intelligence, counter-deception capability rests primarily on institutionalizing in the intelligence process itself the "second look" and the "what if hypothesis." Although initial processors of information can be watchful for signs of deception operations, an artful deception is usually revealed only when all relevant data can be correlated and when the possibility of deception is entertained a priori.

C. Net Assessment:

1. No term is more widely used and more poorly understood. Policy makers clearly want more of the Intelligence Community in this area than comparative order-of-battle and comparison of discrete weapon systems (net technical assessment). In the broader sense usually employed, net assessment has two major dimensions. In one dimension, net assessment calls for systematic correlation of a country's power or behavior across different sectors; i.e., military, technical, economic, political, psychological. It demands correlation of a country's domestic and foreign strengths and weaknesses. As an example of current importance, we require good judgments on the relationships between Soviet economic conditions and Soviet detente, particularly SALT, policy. This kind of net assessment is in no way novel to the Agency. But great effort must constantly be made to assure that the "netting" process is functional and not merely a stapling together of unrelated examinations from unrelated vantage points.

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2. The second and, for intelligence, more novel dimension of net assessment is transnational. In military intelligence, what is being called for is nothing less than comprehensive force exchange analysis that reflects on both foreign and United States capabilities. Military intelligence will necessarily venture closer to the controversies of defense policy in performing this kind of net assessment. Further, it will have to enter a realm of potential military scenarios, options, and force posture alternatives quite as rich and varied as that forced on the United States military policy planner. Military intelligence is, in short, being invited to play a more direct role in the defense policy process. How to accept this challenge without sacrificing intelligence objectivity is a delicate management problem.

E. Future Technologies, Systems, and Strategies:

1. Offices concerned with scientific and technical intelligence devote considerable effort to extrapolating observed technology trends into potential future weapons systems that may only be seen when they are well into development and testing. This effort is a hedge against technological surprise, the importance of which increases as the technological competitiveness of major opponents increases. As United States weapons technological superiority dwindles, so will the advantages of hindsight into Soviet problems. We shall have to rely more on synthetic forecasting techniques to anticipate Soviet progress.

3. Military intelligence must be much more directly attentive, however, to potentially revolutionary changes in the military environment that occur as the result of composite advances in several technologies, perhaps unrelated and undramatic in themselves. Thus, it is not merely MIRV and improving delivery accuracy that imperil silo-based ICBM's, but also the effective

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reconnaissance technology and increased weapon yield/weight ratios that became available many years ago. Important future changes in the strategic environment may sneak up on us in small steps. In combination, low CEP's, real-time strategic reconnaissance, and rapid force-wide retargeting capabilities may have impact on strategy and forces quite as dramatic as, and possibly earlier than, breakthroughs in ABM and ASW technology. The task goes beyond anticipating discrete future technologies and even discrete future weapons systems. It requires anticipation of possible new strategies that may alter the nature of deterrence itself.

F. Theater Priorities:

1. The foregoing observations are addressed directly to assessment of Soviet strategic forces. They could be applied in varying degree to non-Soviet and non-strategic assessments.

2. Military intelligence effort over the next decade should be shaped by an explicit and frequently reviewed menu of output priorities, arising explicitly from policy concerns. Priorities should be established in terms of geographic theaters, hostile participants, and level of violence; for example:

- a. United States-Soviet strategic relationship.
- b. NATO-Pact conventional, tactical, peripheral strategic relationship (including Southeast Europe).
- c. United States-CPR strategic relationship.
- d. CPR-Soviet total military relationship.
- e. Middle East and South Asia; patrons and clients.
- f. Japan and Western Pacific.
- g. Other Third World, particularly Soviet involvement.
- h. Nth country problems.
- i. Other

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3. Substantive priorities have to be established with direct participation of policy makers. At present there is a lot of complaining about priorities and levels of emphasis but comparatively little consistency on what priorities should be.

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